

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 042286
ORIGIN NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

DRAFTED BY NEA:MSTERNER/HLK
APPROVED BY NEA - ALFRED L. ATHERTON, JR.
S/S-0:LFLEISCHER

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O 170221Z FEB 78 ZFF4
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 042286

NODIS
FOR AMBASSADOR FROM ATHERTON

E.O. 11652:XGDS-1

AGS: OVIP (ATHERTON, ALFRED L., JR.), XF, US

SUBJECT: ATHERTON'S VISIT

REF: DAMASCUS 952

1. I HAVE NO WISH TO TRY TO FORCE MYSELF THROUGH SYRIAN
DOORS AGAINST THEIR WISHES, AND DO NOT BELIEVE YOU
SHOULD APPEAR TO BE PRESSING SYRIANS ON THIS. IF
OPPORTUNITY ARISES, HOWEVER, I WONDER WHETHER -- IN
ADDITION TO EXCELLENT ARGUMENTATION YOU USED WITH
KHADDAM -- IT MIGHT NOT BE WORTH ADDING THAT WE ARE
SENSITIVE TO SYRIAN CONCERNS AND I AM ENTIRELY PREPARED
TO COOPERATE WITH SARG IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS THAT WOULD
MAKE IT CLEAR PURPOSE OF TRIP WAS TO INFORM SYRIA OF
STATUS OF PEACE PROCESS AND CONTINUE U.S.-SYRIAN EX-
CHANGES ON THIS SUBJECT BUT NOT TO ENGAGE SYRIANS IN
CURRENT PHASE OF NEGOTIATIONS. FOR OUR PART WE WOULD
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HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH SAYING, IN ADDITION TO WHATEVER
SARG ITSELF MIGHT WISH TO SAY ON SUBJECT, THAT
SYRIAN OFFICIALS HAD MADE IT CLEAR IN THEIR CONVERSATIONS
WITH ME THAT SYRIA DID NOT CHOOSE TO ASSOCIATE ITSELF
WITH THE CURRENT PHASE OF NEGOTIATIONS. IF IT WOULD
HELP, YOU CAN SAY I AM PREPARED TO MAKE DAMASCUS LAST
STOP OF MY ITINERARY BEFORE RETURNING TO WASHINGTON TO

UNDERScore FACT THAT DAMASCUS STOP IS INFORMATIONAL IN NATURE AND NOT PART OF NEGOTIATING PROCESS.

2. POINT YOU MADE TO KHADDAM THAT IT IS POLICY OF THE U.S. TO SUPPORT A COMPREHENSIVE PEACE SETTLEMENT SHOULD BE REITERATED. THAT REMAINS CARDINAL PRINCIPLE OF U.S. POLICY, AS WE UNDERSTAND IT IS ALSO OF SYRIA. WE WOULD THINK IT IS IN SYRIA'S INTEREST AS WELL TO ADOPT A PUBLIC POSITION THAT MAKES IT CLEAR THAT, ALTHOUGH IT MAY DISAGREE WITH THE WAY NEGOTIATIONS HAVE GOTTEN UNDERWAY, IT HAS NOT ABANDONED THIS AS ULTIMATE GOAL. IT SEEMS TO US ANY PROPOSED VISIT WOULD BE ENTIRELY IN HARMONY WITH SUCH A PUBLIC POSTURE.

3. WE WILL OF COURSE BE GUIDED BY SYRIAN WISHES IN THIS MATTER. IF SYRIANS ARE ADAMANTLY OPPOSED, YOU MAY SAY WE WILL LOOK TO OTHER MEANS TO MAINTAIN DIALOGUE, WHICH WE VALUE, WITH DAMASCUS ON PEACE SETTLEMENT. VANCE

SECRET

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